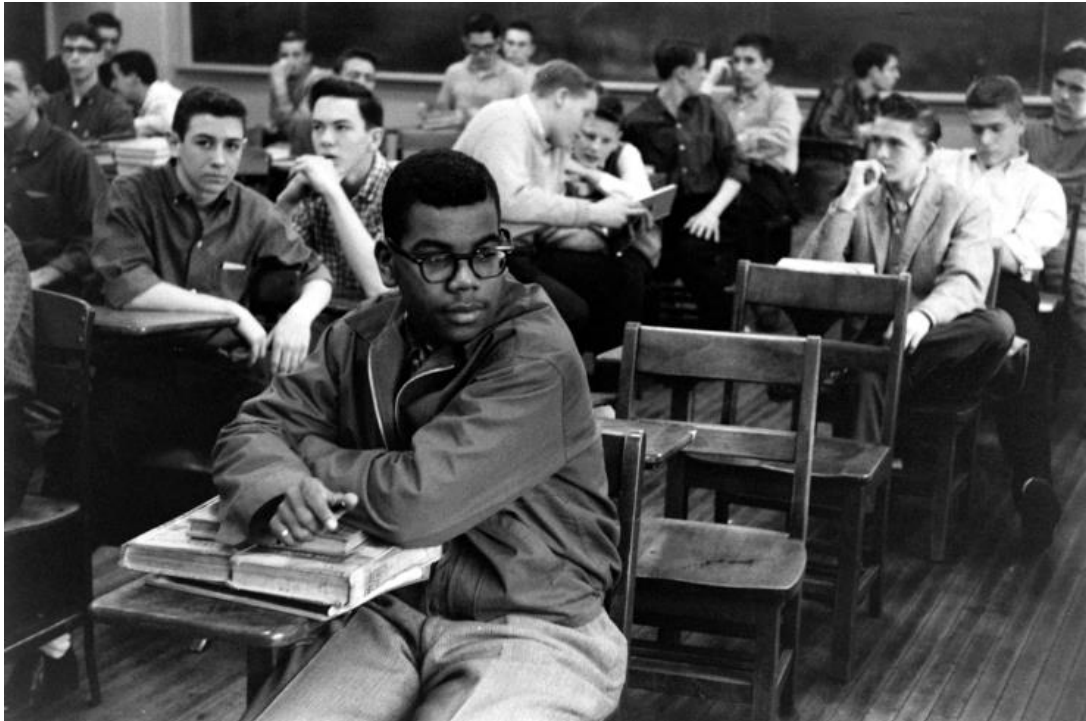


2015 *BENJAMIN M. KING* HUMAN RIGHTS ESSAY CONTEST

2015 Topic: "Diversity in Education"



*Student Louis Cousins sits in newly desegregated Maury High School in Norfolk, VA in 1959.
Photographed by Paul Schultzer/ LIFE.*

"It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength. We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the treads of that tapestry are equal in value no matter their color."

—Maya Angelou



Columbus Human Rights Commission · 123 Washington St. #5 · Columbus, Indiana 47201
812-376-2532 · humanrights@columbus.in.gov

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

The Human Rights Commission is sponsoring an essay contest in each division for the students in Bartholomew County in **grades 5 through 12**. The purpose of the contest is to **create an awareness and appreciation of our community's diversity and for human rights**.

There will be a winner for the contest from each division.

Division 1 - grades 5 & 6 (grade school);
Division 2 - grades 7 & 8 (middle school); and
Division 3 - grades 9 through 12 (high school).

You are invited to share this information with your students and encourage their participation. You may want to include the essay topic in your classroom or youth group curriculum or you may want to leave it as an enrichment or special project for individual students.

1. ENTRY FORM: Each student must submit his/her essay with an attached, completed entry form. Judging is anonymous; therefore it is imperative that the student's name appears ONLY on the entry form and NOT on his/her essay. The information on the entry form is necessary for us to contact contest winners.

2. CRITEREA: Essays: Students must recognize key human rights values and where appropriate, relate these values to the world according to the student. Historical perspectives, current events, personal experiences, and creativity and concise writing are ideal. Essays should be no longer than **one thousand (1,000) words**.

3. DEADLINE: Friday, February 20, 2015. No entries will be accepted after that date.

Hand Delivery to the Commission:

Students or teachers may hand deliver your essays to the Human Rights Commission, no later than **5:00 p.m. on February 20th**.

OR

Pickup at Schools:

First, students or teachers should call the Human Rights Commission (812-376-2532) to arrange to have the entry picked up at the school by **Thursday, February 19th at 5:00 p.m.**

Then, on or before February 20th at 9:00 a.m., take the entry to the school's main office. Inform office staff that you are leaving an entry for pick up by the Human Rights Commission. Make sure to mark the entry(ies) with the following: "ATTENTION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION: ESSAY CONTEST".

4. JUDGING & AWARDS: A panel of community members will judge the essays. We will notify essay contest winners, their teachers, and their schools in the days following the judging. Winners will receive a \$75 award, Malala Yousafzai's newest book titled *I am Malala*, and complimentary tickets to the **Commission's Annual Dinner** where the students will be recognized. Annual Dinner information will be forthcoming. Winning essays will be published on the Commission's website, the annual report, and also submitted to *The Republic*.

2015 Human Rights Commission Essay Topic: "Diversity in Education"

BACKGROUND:

Today, most people think that diversity is an important part of education for students. Many schools have created programs to teach students about other cultures, beliefs, and ideas in order to promote tolerance, to find potential solutions to shared problems, and to prepare students for the future. This positive emphasis on diversity in education is only a recent phenomenon. Historically, many people did not want diversity in schools and kept separate schools for people of different races, beliefs, and backgrounds.

Racially segregated schools were legal until over 60 years ago when the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), that separate schools according to race were unconstitutional. Although the Supreme Court maintained that segregated schools were unequal in 1954, it took many decades later to incorporate racial diversity in formerly segregated schools, especially in the South. Many people who were privileged were afraid that having schools with diverse student bodies would break down the traditional social hierarchy. These people fought to delay the integration of schools by engaging in terrorist acts and threatening particular students and their families.

Even 49 years after the *Brown v. Board* decision, the Supreme Court heard more cases concerning the integration of students from underrepresented minority groups at universities. In one of the cases called *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 244 (2003), the Supreme Court noted the importance of diversity in education because it allowed for students to better understand each other and to dismiss dangerous stereotypes.

Today, diversity in education continues to remain controversial. There are still many schools in the United States and in the rest of the world that struggle to highlight the significance of diversity in education by making education inaccessible to certain groups of people. Some of these groups include students who have disabilities, girls, students from low-income families, students who associate with the LGBTQIA community, students who identify as part of an ethnic and/or racial minority group, and students who belong to minority religious groups. People such as Malala Yousafzai have made a positive impact in the effort to create inclusive schools that emphasize the benefits of learning from diverse student bodies. While our society has dramatically changed since *Brown v. Board*, we still have not fully incorporated diversity into education.

(Continue to next page)

QUESTION:

Do you believe that diversity is an important part of education? You can use examples from your own life if applicable.

Questions to consider:

- What have you learned from people who have different perspectives and life experiences from you?
- Why is it important to become acquainted with people who are different from you?
- What are some current issues concerning diversity or a lack of it?
- What lessons can you draw from *Brown v. Board*?
- Do you think that you will work with a diverse group of people as a part of your future career?
- Do different perspectives and perceptions provide valuable information and insight?
- Do you think that the future population will be more diverse in 50 years?

**YOU MAY, IF YOU WISH, USE INFORMATION PROVIDED TO YOU IN THE
"ESSAY TOOL BOX" TO ASSIST YOU IN WRITING YOUR ESSAY!**

ESSAY CONTEST TOOL BOX

Definitions:

Bias: An unfair act or policy stemming from prejudice.

Dehumanization: To deprive of human qualities or attributes; divest of individuality.

Diversity: Group differences (such as race, sex, color, national origin, religion, disability, etc.)

Education: The process of gaining knowledge through teacher instruction or training.

Hostile environment: A legal term describing the work or school atmosphere that can be created by harassment. Hostile environment can be created by:

- unwelcome sexual advances, other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or slurs or mistreatment based on race, religion, national origin, color, disability, and sex) by another student
- Must be either:
 - severe (can be only one time) or
 - happen over and over (persistent and pervasive)
- Affects student's education or activities so much so that no reasonable student would want to go to school or participate in that activity.

Oppression: The harsh and cruel power of one group of people over another.

Prejudice: An uninformed opinion that is negative and harmful about a particular group of people.

Privilege: An advantage that one small group of people enjoys and benefits from, such as wealth.

Social justice: The act of improving a situation or correcting a wrong or a social problem

Stereotype: An oversimplified image or concept used to describe and categorize specific groups of people.

Quotes:

"Let us remember: One book, one child, and one teacher can change the world." – Malala Yousafzai

In 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in the Court's opinion for *Brown v. Board*: "Today [education] is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later for professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education."

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor was the first female justice on the Supreme Court. She highlighted the significance of diversity in universities in the Court's opinion of *Gratz v. Bollinger*: "These benefits [of diversity in education] are substantial. As the District Court emphasized, the Law School's admissions policy promotes 'cross-racial understanding,' helps to break down racial stereotypes, and 'enables [students] to better understand persons of different races'. . . These benefits are 'important and laudable,' because 'classroom discussion is livelier, more spirited, and simply more enlightening and interesting' when the students have 'the greatest possible variety of backgrounds.'"

"If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal." – President John F. Kennedy.

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Pictures:



NewsHour Productions. "Article: 60th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education Resources." PBS. 2014. Web. 4 Sept. 2014



Nettie Hunt and her daughter Nickie sit on the steps of the Supreme Court building the day after the Supreme Court announced its decision of the *Brown v. Board of Education*.

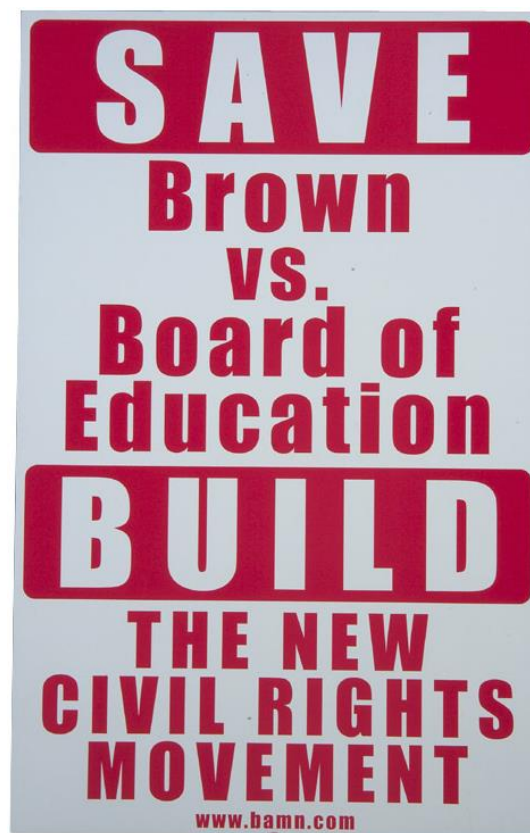
McBride, Alex. "Brown v. Board of Education (1954)." PBS. Dec. 2006. Web. 4 Sept. 2014.



Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani teenager who was shot by the Taliban for being a champion of girls' education. Time Magazine, December 31, 2012. Print.



NewsHour Productions. "Article: 60th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education Resources." *PBS*. 2014. Web. 4 Sept. 2014



A protest sign from April 2003 during the Supreme Court's hearing of *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger*, two cases about affirmative action in admissions for higher education. Smithsonian. "Separate is Not Equal: Brown v. Board of Education." *National Museum of American History*. Web. 8 Dec. 2014.

Online Resources:

[Smithsonian National Museum of American History: "Separate is Not Equal"](#)

[United States Courts: "History of Brown v. Board of Education"](#)

[National Park Service: "Brown v. Board of Education"](#)

[PBS: "Supreme Court History: Expanding Civil Rights"](#)

[UCLA: "The Civil Rights Project"](#)

[Gratz v. Bollinger](#)

[Grutter v. Bollinger](#)

[Brown v. Board of Education](#)